POLK STATE

Office of the President

July 22, 2013

Gow B. Fields
Mayor of Lakeland
228 S. Massachusetts Ave.
Lakeland, FL 33801

Dear Mayor ~~Fields~~ Gow:

This is to notify you of my resignation from the Citizens' Advisory Commission (CAC) you charged with examining challenges and opportunities related to the Lakeland Police Department.

I was and remain honored and grateful that you sought to include our College in your composition of the CAC. As the city's largest college, we are certainly stakeholders in status of LPD, and, despite my resignation from the CAC, I assure you that we will remain engaged citizens and interested observers through the process you have put in place.

As you know, I take every civic involvement very seriously, and since you first asked me to co-chair a group of "five or six" citizens, I have done everything I can to become acquainted with the details of the matter at hand. It has become abundantly clear to me that the significant challenges include:

- The absence of consensus (and meaningful collaboration) on the City Commission
- A series of breakdowns in communication and accountability that span the City's organizational chart, from top to bottom (an issue I see as both cultural and operational)
- An antagonistic relationship between the City and local print media
- A breakdown in trust between the City and the State Attorney's office

The panel of fifteen citizens that you've named includes a wealth of leadership experience, intelligence and integrity. I am hopeful that you are able to bring swift resolution to the ambiguity that lingers with respect to the group's status relative to the "sunshine" law. (For whatever it's worth, my own anticipation had been that the CAC would proceed as if it were fully subject to the sunshine. However, the matter needs a more formal resolution to avoid additional, unnecessary controversy.)

Even as I step away from a formal role with the CAC, I anticipate continued personal and institutional involvement in the search for solutions. I share your interest in restoring the trust that has been lost between the public and a Department that remains home to many honest, brave, hard-working men and women in uniform.

On a personal note, I wish to emphasize the input I have already provided to you: specifically, I encourage you and your colleagues on the Lakeland City Commission to take this crisis as an opportunity to reflect with eyes wide open on the leadership and accountability breakdowns that are already evident. A vital step in rectifying those defects and restoring public trust will involve the candid and decisive way in which you choose to address those issues. The City has the opportunity to enact meaningful reform and, in the process, connect with the citizens you serve in a powerful way.

Sincerely,

Eileen Holden

Eileen Holden, Ed.D.
President

cc: Joe P. Ruthven